

NEWS

from

Downing Street

Time to try out the surgery's 24-hour booking system

THE SURGERY'S new telephone system, which allows patients to make or change appointments 24 hours a day, is now up and running and being regularly used.

Work by the surgery and the service providers to solve some early problems has resulted in the system being fully operational since the beginning of September.

The service, called Patient Partner, is linked to the practice's appointments system. Patients who use the automated system can phone the surgery round the clock, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to book, cancel, review or change routine doctors' appointments – not "on the day" emergency appointments, however.

The automated system gives patients more choice about when they can call and also frees up the telephone lines at traditionally busy times of the day for queries and emergencies. At peak times the surgery receives as many as 40 calls a minute.

It's so easy to use

The new automated system is easy to use. Just dial the surgery number, which is **08444 125 888**, and follow the very clear and simple spoken instructions. The system will tell you the doctors' appointments which are available and allow you to choose just by pressing one of the buttons on your telephone. You can also check your existing appointments and cancel or alter them if you wish.

The best advice is – Just have a go and see if you like the new way.

Don't worry if you do not want to use the automated system – when you telephone you can still choose to talk to a friendly receptionist in normal opening hours.

Do you know that you can also use the internet to access the surgery, book or cancel appointments and request repeat prescriptions? From our website, which is **www.downingstreetsurgery.co.uk**, first download registration forms then bring them to Reception. Allow 48 hours then call at Reception again with a photograph identification, for example your driving licence, and proof of address such as a utility bill, to receive your authorisation to enable you to use internet instead of the 'phone.

MORE NEWS *from the Downing Street Surgery*

SWINE FLU – THE DOCTORS' ADVICE	on page 2
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Are you still puzzled about swine Flu?

MANY people are worried about the risk of catching swine flu, perhaps unnecessarily or more than we need to be. *The surgery has the following advice:*

If you experience a sudden fever, cough or shortness of breath, or have a headache, a sore throat, tiredness, aching muscles, chills, sneezing, a runny nose or loss of appetite you may unfortunately have swine flu.

For most people this is a mild illness and you should start to feel better after a few days without needing to go to your GP, accident and emergency, or a walk-in centre.

The best thing you can do is stay at home, drink plenty of fluids, and take over-the-counter flu remedies to help relieve the symptoms.

However, it is important that you talk to a doctor if you are pregnant, very young, over 65, or have a long-term health condition such as asthma or diabetes.

If you feel very unwell, as mentioned above, you can check your symptoms online at www.nhs.uk or call the swine flu information line on **0800 1 513 513**.

Still concerned after taking these steps? Call NHS Direct on **0845 4647** or ring the surgery for more advice

WHEN swine flu vaccine becomes available the practice will hold clinics – information on dates and times will be posted on the website and in the surgery as soon as possible.

'By appointment' on Monday evenings

PATIENTS who have difficulty in getting to the surgery at normal times, perhaps because of their working hours, can make an appointment for Monday evenings between 6.30pm and 8pm.

Saturday morning appointments are also available, between 8am and 11.30am for commuters.

OUT OF HOURS house calls are handled for the practice by ThamesDoc. The number to call is 020 8390 9990.

PBC -- It's the coming thing for patients

WHAT do the initials PBC stand for? The answer is Practice Based Commissioning, a new initiative in the National Health Service which has the aim of making life easier for many patients.

The introduction of PBC is now a requirement by the Department of Health whereby general practitioners will have access to specialist and consultant services in their own locality.

Services involved are such things as physiotherapy and diabetic retinopathy screening which may at present involve long waiting lists or travelling to a distant hospital such as Frimley Park or the Royal Surrey at Guildford.

The idea is that patients will be seen or treated more quickly and nearer to home.

All five practices in the Farnham area, serving some 44,000 people between them, are currently taking part together in exploring the possibilities of PBC.

CAN YOU HELP?

THE PRACTICE is considering ways to improve access to the surgery and one problem is that of patients without their own transport and who have difficulty in using public transport.

Some are able to use the Hoppa community bus (01428 681701) but many would appreciate lifts by car to and from the surgery.

Ideas and offers of help will be welcome and appreciated.